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Trump embraces Putin, doubts U.S. intel findings

Presidents steer clear of any confrontations

The Associated Press

HELSINKI — In what was seen by many as an extraordinary embrace of a longtime U.S. enemy, President Donald Trump on Monday openly questioned his own intelligence agencies' firm finding that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. election to his benefit, seeming to accept Russian President Vladimir Putin's insistence that Moscow's hands were clean.

The reaction back home was immediate and visceral, among fellow Republicans as well as usual Trump critics. "Shameful," "disgraceful," "weak," were a few of the comments. Makes the U.S. "look like a pushover," said GOP Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee.

Mr. Trump's meeting with Mr. Putin in Helsinki was his first time sharing the international stage with a man he has described as an important U.S. competitor — but whom he has also praised a strong, effective leader.

His remarks, siding with a foe on foreign soil over his own government, was a stark illustration of Mr. Trump's willingness to upend decades of U.S. foreign policy and rattle Western allies in service of his political concerns. A wary and robust stance toward Russia has been a bedrock of his party's world view. But Mr. Trump made clear he feels that any firm acknowledgement of Russia's involvement would undermine the legitimacy of his election.

Standing alongside Mr. Putin, Mr. Trump steered clear of any confrontation with the Russian, going so far as to question American intelligence and last week's federal indictments that accused 12 Russians of hacking into Democratic email accounts to hurt Hillary Clinton in 2016.

"I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today.

"He just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be," Mr. Trump said.

His skepticism drew a quick formal statement — almost a rebuttal — from Mr. Trump's director of

SEE **TRUMP**, PAGE A-3

Doug Mills/The New York Times

President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia appear at a joint news conference Monday in Helsinki, Finland.

Toomey denounces both Trump and Putin

By Julian Routh
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey joined many Republicans and Democrats alike in fiercely denouncing Vladimir Putin in the hours after the Russian president's meeting and news conference Monday with Donald Trump.

Mr. Toomey also took on the U.S. president, tweeting: "@POTUS' blindness to Putin's hostile acts against the U.S. and our allies — election meddling included — is very troubling."

But several other Senate Republicans didn't mention Mr. Trump in their statements about the summit, even though he echoed many of the same things for which the Russian president was criticized.

Instead, they emphasized their support of American intelligence agencies and their conclusion that Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential election, while leaving out Mr. Trump and his open questioning of his intelligence agencies.

Mr. Toomey, the top Pennsylvania Republican, pulled no punches

SEE **TOOMEY**, PAGE A-3

Protesters disrupt Downtown rush hour

Demonstrators seek justice for Antwon

By Kevin Flowers
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

About 50 protesters blocked a number of Downtown streets during rush hour Monday afternoon and continued to ask for justice in the police-shooting death of Antwon Rose II.

It has been almost one month since Antwon, 17, was shot by East Pittsburgh police Officer Michael Rosfeld after the teen ran from a vehicle during a traffic stop June 19. The demonstrators braved the sweltering heat during rush hour, determined to keep Antwon's death in the public consciousness.

The protest began at the City-County Building and worked its way toward the Boulevard of the Allies at Grant Street. Commuters trying to make their way home from Downtown, as well as those who rely on public transportation, were delayed during the demonstration. Some drivers simply turned around as the protesters approached.

The protest did not go off without incident. Pittsburgh police spokesman Chris Togneri said that at about 5 p.m., a

SEE **PROTEST**, PAGE A-10

Property would cost $27.5M and house city offices

URA plans to buy former Art Institute building

By Mark Belko
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

City Urban Redevelopment Authority board members approved a plan Monday to buy the former Art Institute of Pittsburgh building Downtown for $27.5 million, a property that a Chicago developer acquired for $10 million four years ago before spending millions more to upgrade it.

The 5-0 vote was the first step in a bid to move the URA, the Pittsburgh Housing Authority and some city offices to the location at 420 Blvd. of the Allies from their home in the aging John P. Robin Civic Building at 200 Ross St.

In backing the plan, URA officials said the move would better assist the public with larger meeting spaces and a one-stop shop for permits, licenses, inspections and other city services while providing a nicer, more collaborative work environment for employees.

To fund the acquisition, the city plans to borrow up to $40 million — enough to finance the purchase and to build out the space needed for its staff, which also includes the planning and zoning departments.

Robert Rubinstein, URA executive director, acknowledged that the investment is a sizable one. But he maintained it was worthwhile, given that it would cost about $39 million to renovate the Robin Building to bring it up to acceptable standards.

He said that the Robin Building is in a dilapidated state, with inoperable windows; poor air conditioning, heating and elevators; inefficient floor layouts; and other deficiencies. Board Chairman Kevin Acklin said the structure doesn't even comply with some fire and building code requirements.

The city, URA and Housing Authority each would own a third of the former Art Institute building.

They are buying it from M&J Wilkow, which purchased the nine-story structure for $10 million in 2014, according to Allegheny County real estate records, and spent another $11 million to renovate it.

Gerry Dudley, a CBRE executive vice president who assisted the URA in the search for a new space, said the price the entities are paying, at $174 a square foot, is in the mid to upper range of the market,

SEE **URA**, PAGE A-10

QUEEN OF THE RIVERS

Harrison Jones/Post-Gazette

Passengers stand aboard the American Queen riverboat Monday as it leaves Pittsburgh, as seen from the North Shore. **Story, B-3.**

Rivers Casino joins push to offer online gambling

By Gary Rotstein
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Rivers Casino opted Monday to join at least five others across the state in planning an online range of gambling options similar to what is available to customers who walk in their doors.

Monday marked the deadline for Pennsylvania's 13 casinos to apply for what is known as a "bundled" $10 million license to provide slot machine play, table games and poker to customers within the state who create online accounts. Once technical requirements and Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board regulations are complete, which is expected to take months, enthusiasts will be able to gamble from home, work or anywhere else within the state's borders.

There had been uncertainty over how many casinos would take advantage of the opportunity created by last October's gambling expansion law, which made Pennsylvania just the fourth state permitting online casino games.

The law was enacted to help fill the state's budget hole, and industry representatives complained that its $10 million fee and tax rates — particularly the same 54

SEE **CASINO**, PAGE A-10

Weather
Morning thunderstorm
Daytime high, 83
tonight's low, 58
Page D-8

Ask Natalie **D-1**
Bridge **D-6**
Business **B-6**
Classified **C-8**
Comics **D-5**
Crosswords **D-6**
Editorials **A-8**
Horoscope..... **D-6**
Letters to Editor **A-8**
Local News **B-1**
Lottery **B-2**
Magazine **D-1**
Obituaries **B-3**
Scoreboard **C-7**
Sports **C-1**
Stargazing **D-2**
Television **D-4**
Tony Norman **A-9**

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